

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 00375 170256Z

63

ACTION H-03

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----- 014208

P R 170215Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6394

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

PANCANAL

USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OREP, (WOLFF, LESTER L.)

SUBJECT: CODEL WOLFF'S VISIT TO PANAMA

SUMMARY: CONGRESSMEN WOLFF AND GILMAN LEFT FOR BOGOTA AFTER THEIR DAY AND A HALF VISIT JANUARY 13-14. CONGRESMEN WERE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH NARCOTICS WHICH SUBJECT THEY DISCUSSED WITH EMBASSY OFFICIALS, GOVERNOR PARFITT, GENERAL MCAULIFFE AND, DURING THEIR ONE HOUR CONVERSATION WITH HIM, PRESIDENT LAKAS. (CODEL HAD CANCELLED APPOINTMENT WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL, SEE SAN JOSE 125.) CANAL NEGOTIATIONS WERE DISCUSSED WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND PRESIDENT LAKAS. END SUMMARY.

1. CONGRESSMEN WOLFF AND FILMAN, DURING THEIR BRIEF STAY IN PANAMA JANUARY 13-14, MADE CLEAR TO ALL WITH WHOM THEY SPOKE THEIR CONCERN OVER INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS TRAFFIC, PARTICULARLY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA AND PANAMA'S POSSIBLE "FUNNEL" ROLE IN IT. AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OFFICIALS (INCLUDING NARCOTICS COORDINATOR, DCM GONZALEZ, AND DEA SAIC BEDOLLA), GOVERNOR PARFITT, GEN. MCAULIFFE AND MILITARY DUG OFFICIAL WERE ALL QUERIED ON THIS TOPIC. CONGRESSMEN EMPHASIZED HOW SERIOUS A PROBLEM DRUG IN THE UNITED STATES IS, HOW SERIOUSLY IT IS TAKEN BY CONGRESS, AS WELL AS THE ADMINISTRATION, AND HOW CRUCIAL INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IS TO CHOKE OFF SOURCES OF SUPPLY.

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CONGRESSMEN RECEIVED INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT OF PANAMA'S

EFFORTS, HER COOPERATION WITH U.S. AGENCIES, AND THOSE AGENCIES' OWN EFFORTS TO CONTROL FLOW OF DRUGS THROUGH THE ISTHMUS.

2. CONGRESSMEN DISCUSSED CANAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH AMBASSADOR WESNESDAY MORNING, AND, LATER THAT MORNING, WITH PRESIDENT LAKAS. IN CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR, BOTH NOTED CANAL ISSUE'S STATUS AS IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY QUESTION, AND STATED THEY HAD COME TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IT FIRST HAND. CONGRESSMAN WOLFF WORRIED WHETHER THE UNITED STATES OUGHT TO SURRENDER CONTROL OF THE CANAL WHICH, IN HIS VIEW, IS "SO IMPORTANT TO OUR CONTROL OF THE SEA LANES". HE QUESTIONED THE RELATION BETWEEN THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO NEGOTIATE A NEW TREATY AND PANAMA'S CONTRACT WITH U.S. EMBODIED IN 1903 TREATY, AND ADDED HE PERSONALLY CONSIDERS THE CANAL A "NATIONAL TREASUE". AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NEGOTIATING TO PROTECT OUR INTEREST IN OPEN, SAVE, EFFICIENT AND NEUTRAL OPERATION OF THE CANAL, AND TO CREATE A NEW, PARTNERSHIP RELATION WITH A SMALL, BUT BASICALLY FRIENDLY, NATION.

3. HIGHLIGHT OF CODEL VISIT WAS ITS ONE HOUR CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT LAKAS. DISCUSSION DWELT ON DRUGS FOR TWO THIRDS OF THE TIME, DURING WHICH BOTH MEMBERS EXPRESSED THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE NARCOTICS PROBLEM, AND HOW PANAMA'S COOPERATION IS, ALONG WITH THAT OF HER NEIGHBORS, TO CONTROL THIS U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL TRAGDY. PRESIDENT LAKAS ASSURED CONGRESSMEN IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT SHARED THEIR VIEWS AND OBJECTIVES, HAD COOPERATED IN THE PAST, WERE DOING SO IN THE PRESENT, AND WERE READY TO DO EVEN MORE IF THEY COULD TO HALT DRUG TRAFFIC.

4. CONGRESSMEN RECEIVED ABLE EXPOSITION OF PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS VIS-A-VIS A NEW TREATY PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES FROM THE PRESIDENT. LAKAS EMPHASIZED THAT PANAMA NEEDED THE UNITED STATES, AND WAS BOUND TO IT NOT ONLY BY HISTORY BUT BY AFFECTION. HE SAID IT PAINED HIM TO READ THAT SOME WERE DESCRIBING PANAMA AS A POSSIBLE VIET NAM. HE SCOFFED AT THAT ESTIMATE, AND INVITED THE CONGRESSMEN TO CONSIDER THE PROPORTIONS OF STRENGTH AND SIZE OF THE TWO NATIONS.

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 00375 170256Z

5. GOVERNOR PARFITT OUTLINED BRIEFLY FOR CODEL STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS OF THE CANAL ENTERPRISE, EXPLAINED HIS DUAL ROLE AS CANAL COMPANY PRESIDENT, AND CANAL ZONE GOVERNOR, AND BRIEFED CONGRESSMEN ON CURRENT FINANCIAL PROBLEMS THE CANAL ENCOUNTERS. FOLLOWING THEIR DISCUSSION, CONGRESSMEN, AFTER SWIFT TRIP TO MIRAFLORES LOCKS, TOOK HELICOPTER FLIGHT OVER CANAL ZONE AS GUESTS OF, AND ACCOMPANIED BY, GENERAL MCAULIFFE.

6. MEMORANDA OF CONCERSATION, AS REQUESTED BY CODEL
(SEE STATE 002686), SCHEDULE AND GUEST LIST BEING POUCHED
ARA/PAN.
JORDEN

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